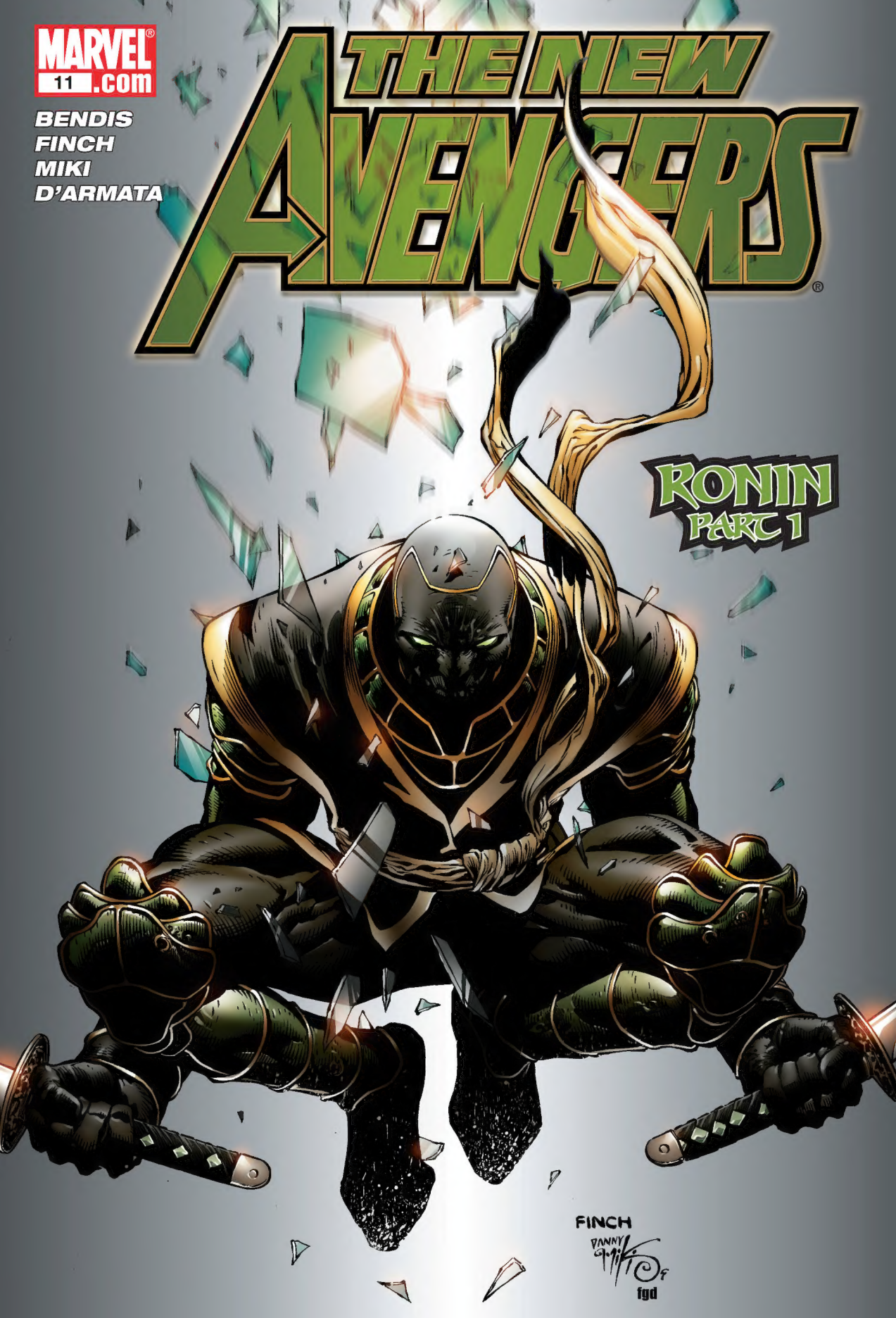

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And there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's mightiest heroes found themselves united against a common threat! On that day, the Avengers were born--to fight the foes no single super hero could withstand! Stan Lee presents…

THE NEW AVENGERS

When a breakout occurs at the high-tech maximum security prison known as the Raft, Captain America, Iron Man, Luke Cage, Spider-Man, Spider-Woman, and the mysterious powerhouse known as the Sentry gather together to battle the rioting criminals. Captain America convinces Iron Man that a new team of Avengers has been brought together by fate. Though the formation of the team has not been made public, the New Avengers, including the X-Man Wolverine, now operate out of Stark tower.

Only one member of the super hero community who was present the first night the New Avengers fought together refused to join the team—Matt Murdock, known throughout Hell's Kitchen as Daredevil.

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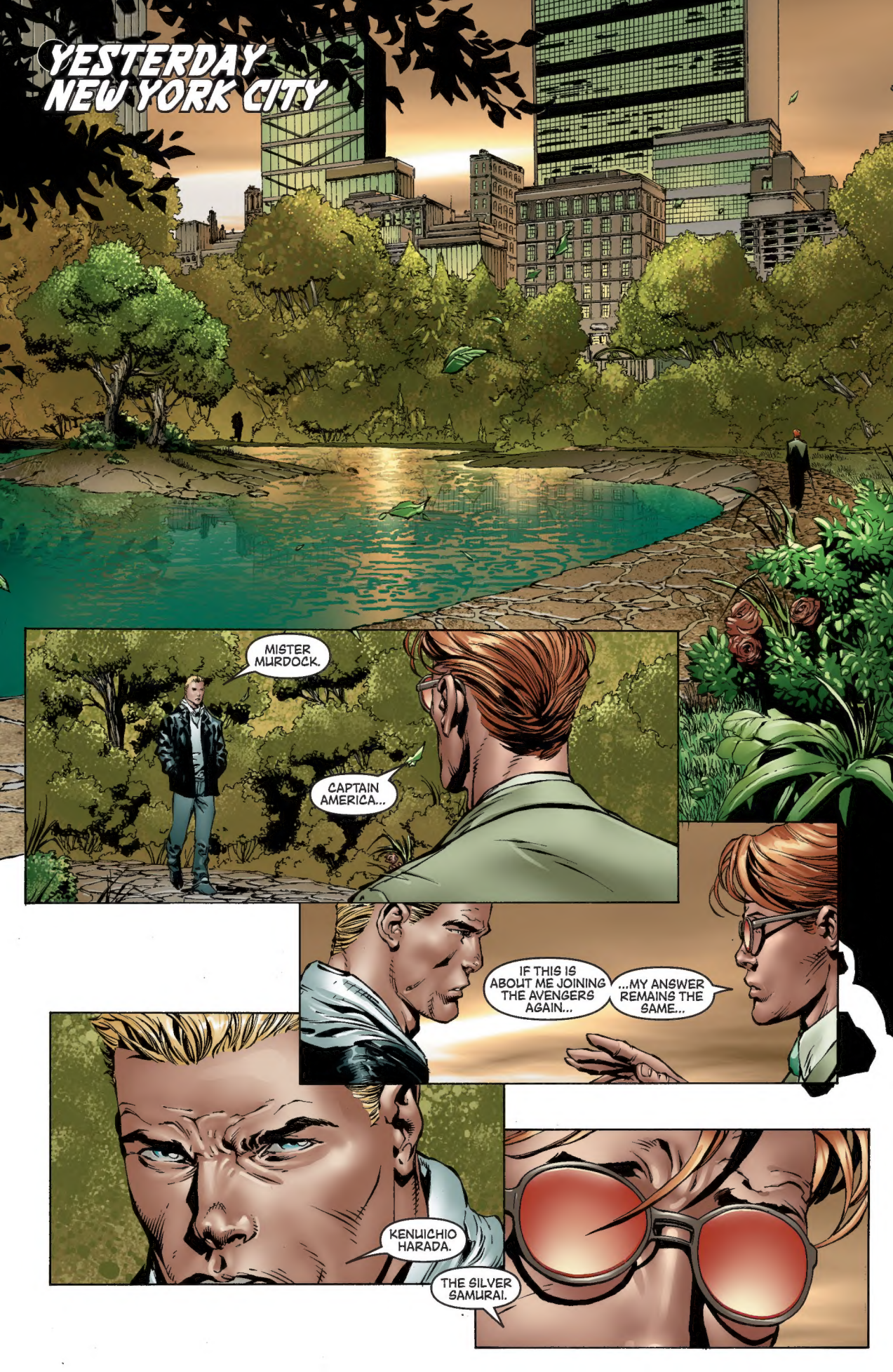
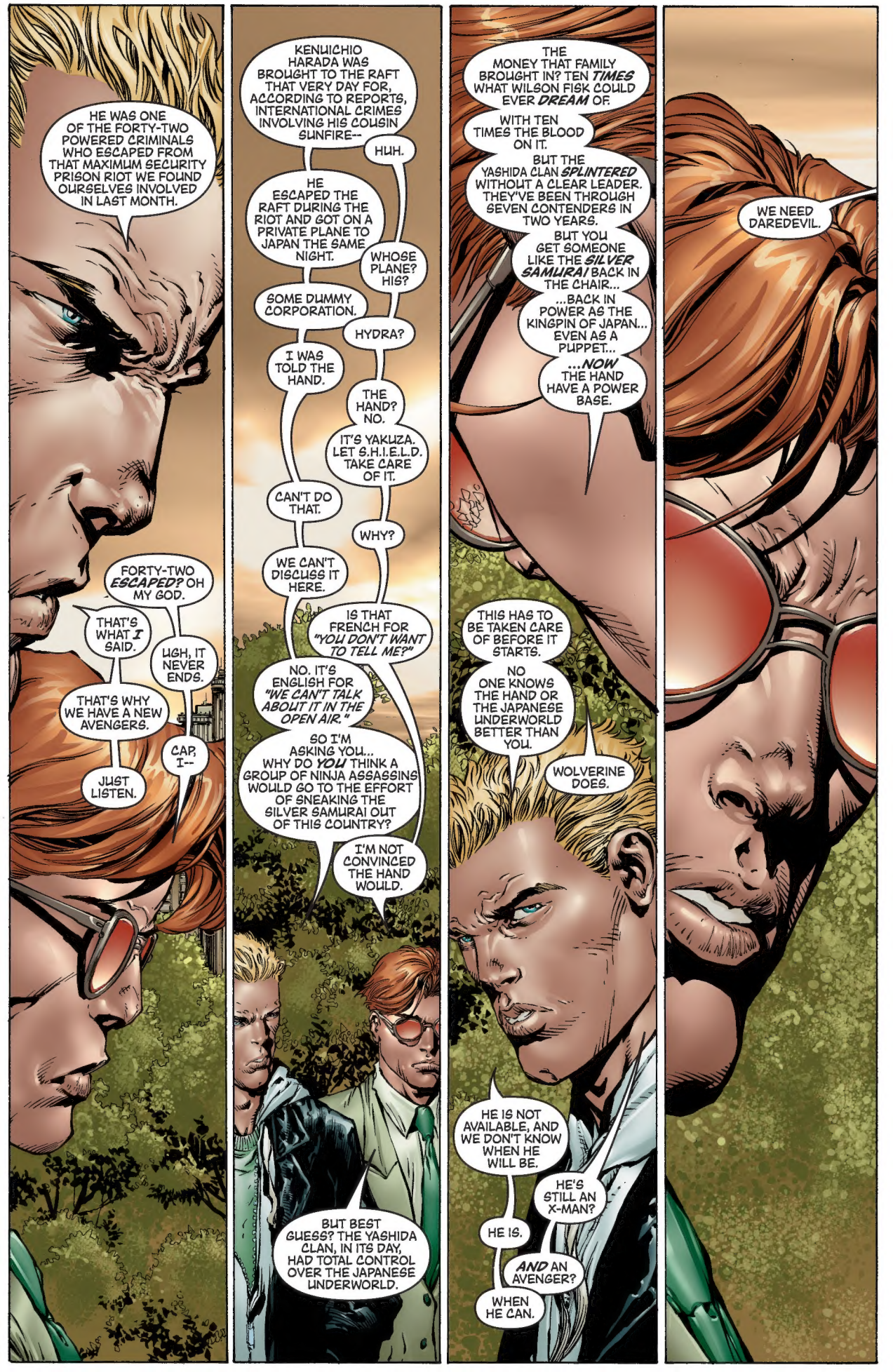
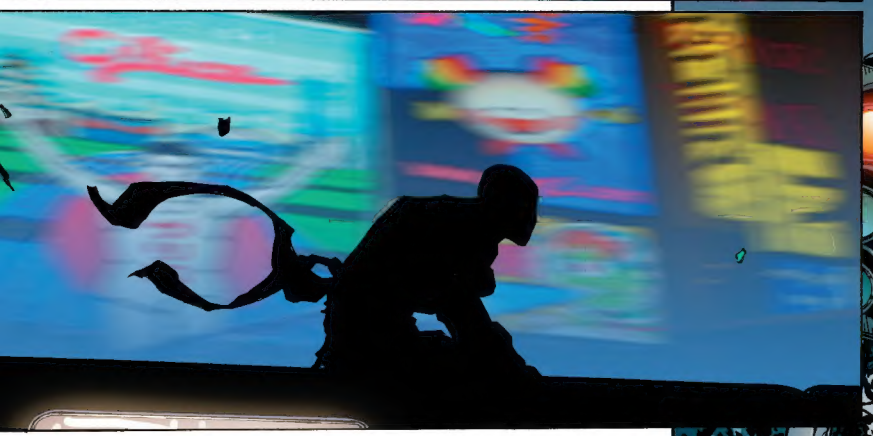
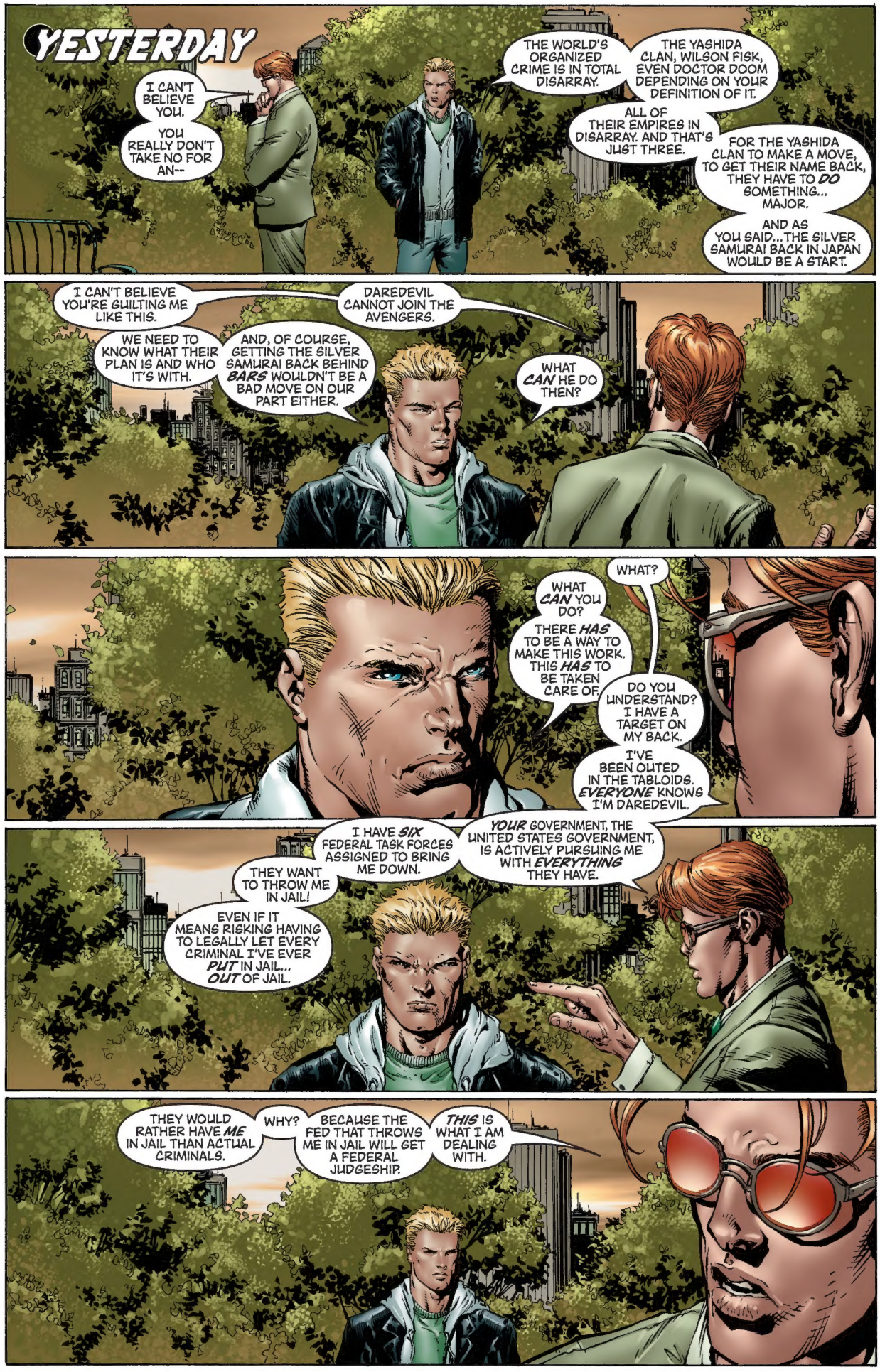
TODAY
OSAKA, JAPAN
BAM
CRACK
GAH!
ARGH!
FAK
SPLACK
BAM
BONK
SMACK

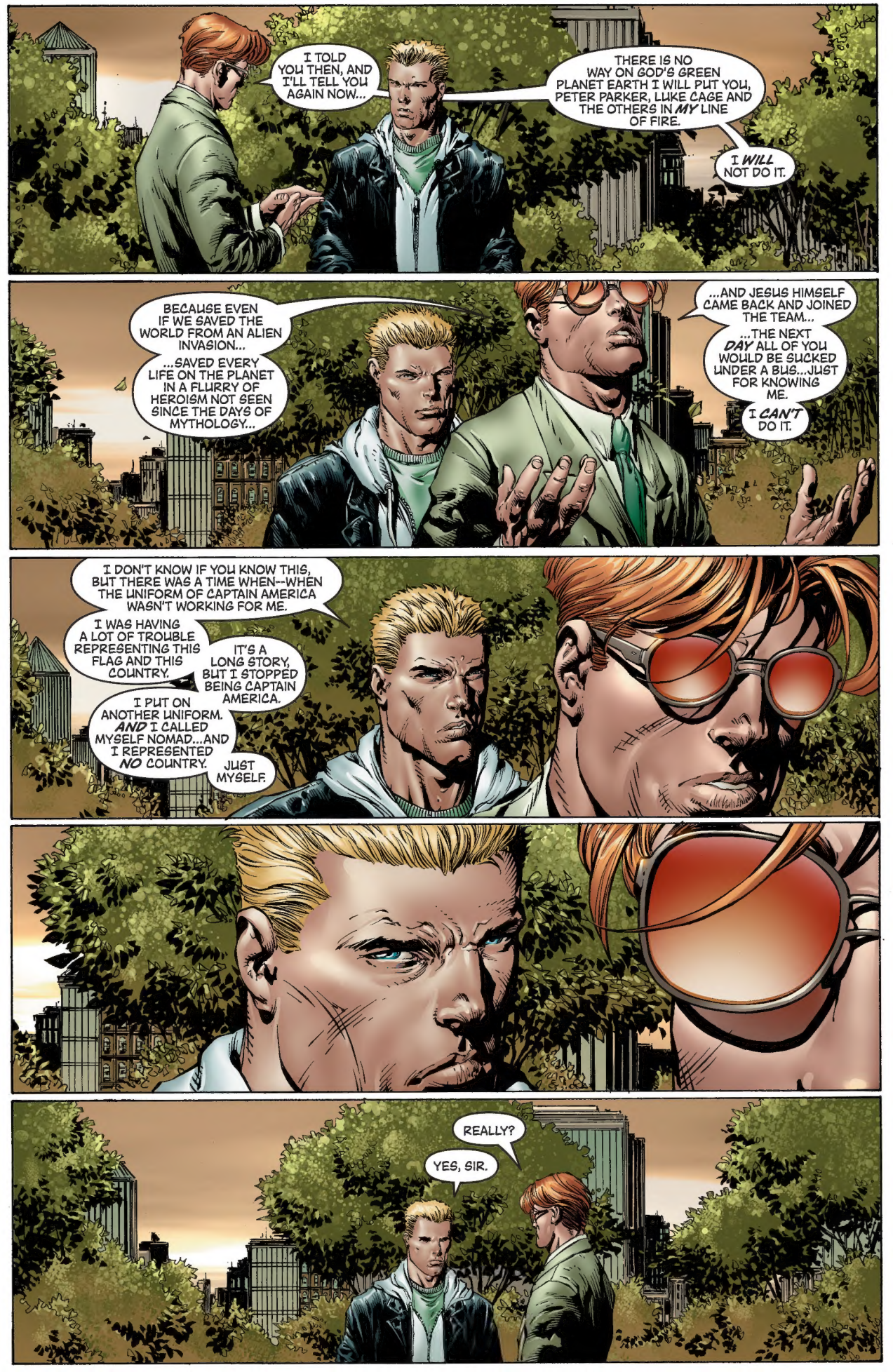
NOW I ASK *AGAIN!*
WHO WILL TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW?

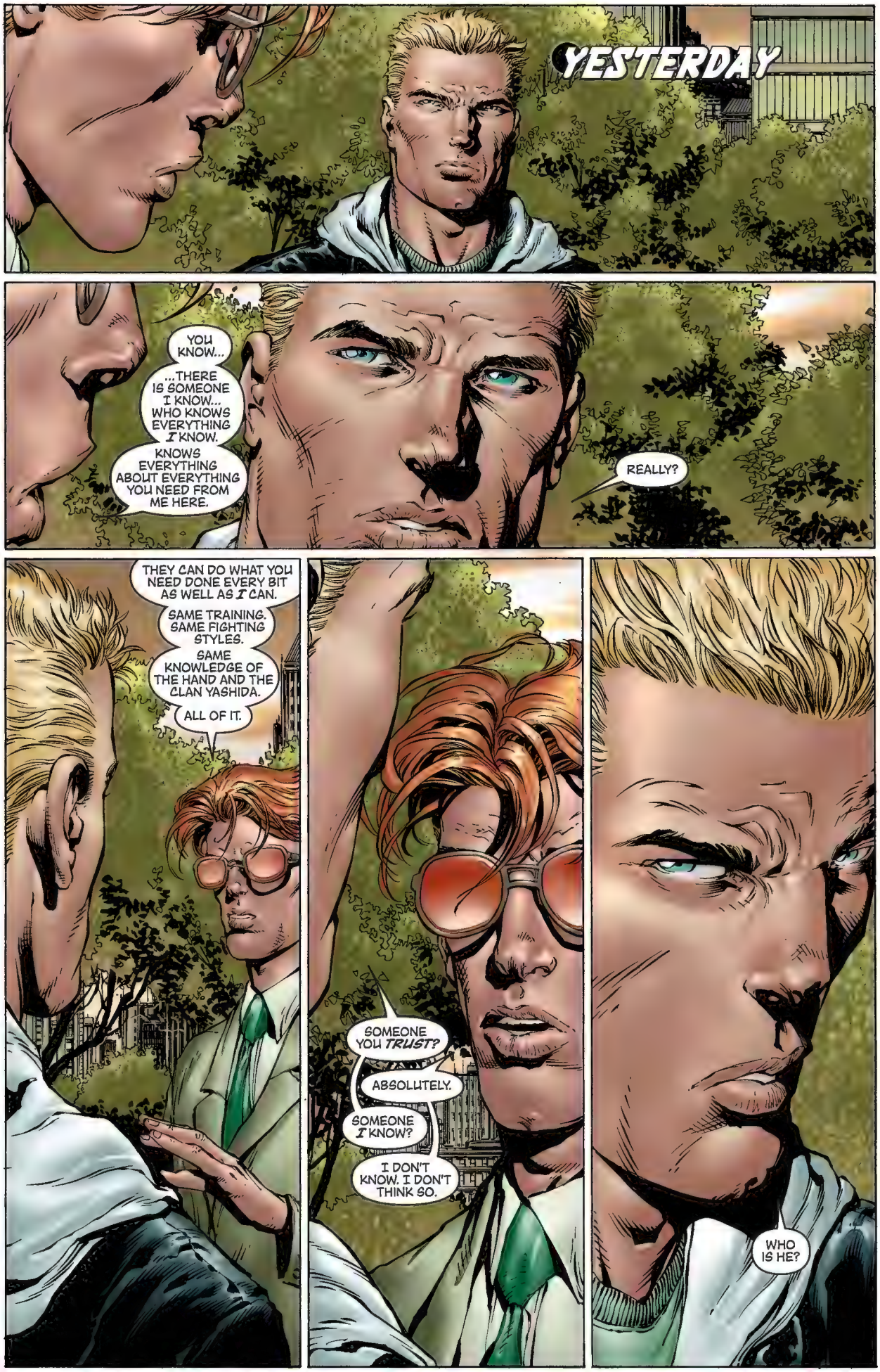

YESTERDAY
NEW YORK CITY
MISTER MURDOCK.
CAPTAIN AMERICA...
IF THIS IS ABOUT ME JOINING THE AVENGERS AGAIN...
...MY ANSWER REMAINS THE SAME...
KENUICHIO HARADA.
THE SILVER SAMURAI.

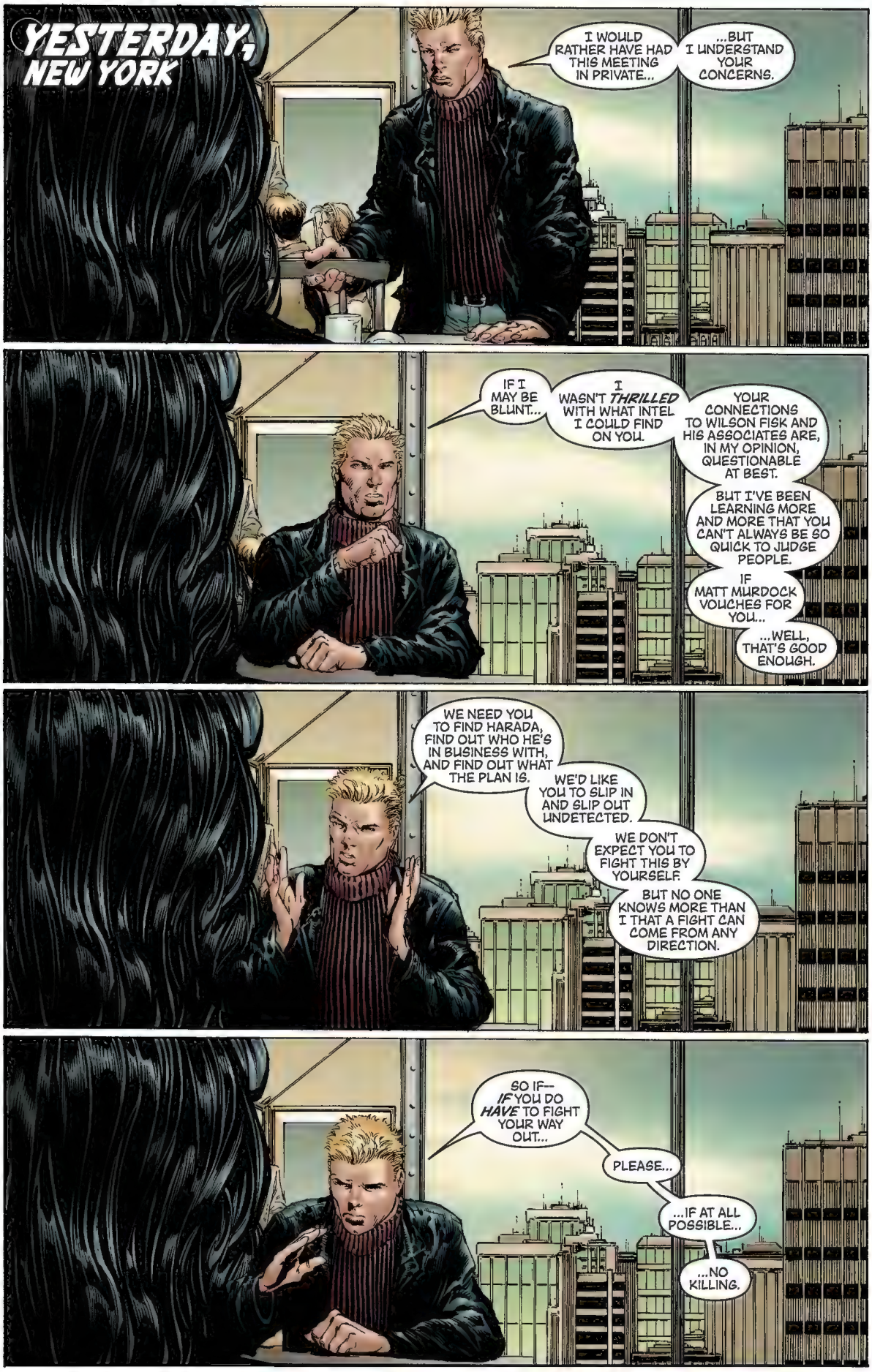

HE WAS ONE OF THE FORTY-TWO POWERED CRIMINALS WHO ESCAPED FROM THAT MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON RIOT WE FOUND OURSELVES INVOLVED IN LAST MONTH.
FORTY-TWO ESCAPED? OH MY GOD.
THAT'S WHAT I SAID.
UGH, IT NEVER ENDS.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE A NEW AVENGERS.
CAP, I--
JUST LISTEN.
KENUICHIO HARADA WAS BROUGHT TO THE RAFT THAT VERY DAY FOR, ACCORDING TO REPORTS, INTERNATIONAL CRIMES INVOLVING HIS COUSIN SUNFIRE--
HUH.
HE ESCAPED THE RAFT DURING THE RIOT AND GOT ON A PRIVATE PLANE TO JAPAN THE SAME NIGHT.
WHOSE PLANE? HIS?
SOME DUMMY CORPORATION.
HYDRA?
I WAS TOLD THE HAND.
THE HAND? NO.
IT'S YAKUZA. LET S.H.I.E.L.D. TAKE CARE OF IT.
CAN'T DO THAT.
WHY?
WE CAN'T DISCUSS IT HERE.
IS THAT FRENCH FOR "YOU DON'T WANT TO TELL ME?"
NO. IT'S ENGLISH FOR "WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT IN THE OPEN AIR."
SO I'M ASKING YOU... WHY DO YOU THINK A GROUP OF NINJA ASSASSINS WOULD GO TO THE EFFORT OF SNEAKING THE SILVER SAMURAI OUT OF THIS COUNTRY?
I'M NOT CONVINCED THE HAND WOULD.
BUT BEST GUESS? THE YASHIDA CLAN, IN ITS DAY, HAD TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD.
THE MONEY THAT FAMILY BROUGHT IN? TEN TIMES WHAT WILSON FISK COULD EVER DREAM OF.
WITH TEN TIMES THE BLOOD ON IT.
BUT THE YASHIDA CLAN SPLINTERED WITHOUT A CLEAR LEADER. THEY'VE BEEN THROUGH SEVEN CONTENDERS IN TWO YEARS.
BUT YOU GET SOMEONE LIKE THE SILVER SAMURAI BACK IN THE CHAIR...
...BACK IN POWER AS THE KINGPIN OF JAPAN... EVEN AS A PUPPET...
...NOW THE HAND HAVE A POWER BASE.
THIS HAS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF BEFORE IT STARTS.
NO ONE KNOWS THE HAND OR THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD BETTER THAN YOU.
WOLVERINE DOES.
HE IS NOT AVAILABLE, AND WE DON'T KNOW WHEN HE WILL BE.
HE'S STILL AN X-MAN?
HE IS.
AND AN AVENGER?
WHEN HE CAN.
WE NEED DAREDEVIL.




YESTERDAY
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU.
YOU REALLY DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN--
THE WORLD'S ORGANIZED CRIME IS IN TOTAL DISARRAY.
THE YASHIDA CLAN, WILSON FISK, EVEN DOCTOR DOOM DEPENDING ON YOUR DEFINITION OF IT.
ALL OF THEIR EMPIRES IN DISARRAY. AND THAT'S JUST THREE.
FOR THE YASHIDA CLAN TO MAKE A MOVE, TO GET THEIR NAME BACK, THEY HAVE TO DO SOMETHING... MAJOR.
AND AS YOU SAID...THE SILVER SAMURAI BACK IN JAPAN WOULD BE A START.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE GUILTING ME LIKE THIS.
DAREDEVIL CANNOT JOIN THE AVENGERS.
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEIR PLAN IS AND WHO IT'S WITH.
AND, OF COURSE, GETTING THE SILVER SAMURAI BACK BEHIND BARS WOULDN'T BE A BAD MOVE ON OUR PART EITHER.
WHAT CAN HE DO THEN?
WHAT?
WHAT CAN YOU DO?
THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO MAKE THIS WORK. THIS HAS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND? I HAVE A TARGET ON MY BACK.
I'VE BEEN OUTED IN THE TABLOIDS. EVERYONE KNOWS I'M DAREDEVIL.
I HAVE SIX FEDERAL TASK FORCES ASSIGNED TO BRING ME DOWN.
YOUR GOVERNMENT, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, IS ACTIVELY PURSUING ME WITH EVERYTHING THEY HAVE.
THEY WANT TO THROW ME IN JAIL!
EVEN IF IT MEANS RISKING HAVING TO LEGALLY LET EVERY CRIMINAL I'VE EVER PUT IN JAIL... OUT OF JAIL.
THEY WOULD RATHER HAVE ME IN JAIL THAN ACTUAL CRIMINALS.
WHY?
BECAUSE THE FED THAT THROWS ME IN JAIL WILL GET A FEDERAL JUDGESHIP.
THIS IS WHAT I AM DEALING WITH.


I TOLD YOU THEN, AND I'LL TELL YOU AGAIN NOW...
THERE IS NO WAY ON GOD'S GREEN PLANET EARTH I WILL PUT YOU, PETER PARKER, LUKE CAGE AND THE OTHERS IN MY LINE OF FIRE.
I WILL NOT DO IT.
BECAUSE EVEN IF WE SAVED THE WORLD FROM AN ALIEN INVASION...
...SAVED EVERY LIFE ON THE PLANET IN A FLURRY OF HEROISM NOT SEEN SINCE THE DAYS OF MYTHOLOGY...
...AND JESUS HIMSELF CAME BACK AND JOINED THE TEAM...
...THE NEXT DAY ALL OF YOU WOULD BE SUCKED UNDER A BUS...JUST FOR KNOWING ME.
I CAN'T DO IT.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU KNOW THIS, BUT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN--WHEN THE UNIFORM OF CAPTAIN AMERICA WASN'T WORKING FOR ME.
I WAS HAVING A LOT OF TROUBLE REPRESENTING THIS FLAG AND THIS COUNTRY.
IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT I STOPPED BEING CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I PUT ON ANOTHER UNIFORM. AND I CALLED MYSELF NOMAD...AND I REPRESENTED NO COUNTRY.
JUST MYSELF.
REALLY?
YES, SIR.


YESTERDAY
YOU KNOW...
...THERE IS SOMEONE I KNOW... WHO KNOWS EVERYTHING I KNOW.
KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU NEED FROM ME HERE.
REALLY?
THEY CAN DO WHAT YOU NEED DONE EVERY BIT AS WELL AS I CAN.
SAME TRAINING. SAME FIGHTING STYLES.
SAME KNOWLEDGE OF THE HAND AND THE CLAN YASHIDA.
ALL OF IT.
SOMEONE YOU TRUST?
ABSOLUTELY.
SOMEONE I KNOW?
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T THINK SO.
WHO IS HE?


YESTERDAY, NEW YORK
I WOULD RATHER HAVE HAD THIS MEETING IN PRIVATE...
...BUT I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERNS.
IF I MAY BE BLUNT...
I WASN'T THRILLED WITH WHAT INTEL I COULD FIND ON YOU.
YOUR CONNECTIONS TO WILSON FISK AND HIS ASSOCIATES ARE, IN MY OPINION, QUESTIONABLE AT BEST.
BUT I'VE BEEN LEARNING MORE AND MORE THAT YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE PEOPLE.
IF MATT MURDOCK VOUCHES FOR YOU...
...WELL, THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH.
WE NEED YOU TO FIND HARADA, FIND OUT WHO HE'S IN BUSINESS WITH, AND FIND OUT WHAT THE PLAN IS.
WE'D LIKE YOU TO SLIP IN AND SLIP OUT UNDETECTED.
WE DON'T EXPECT YOU TO FIGHT THIS BY YOURSELF.
BUT NO ONE KNOWS MORE THAN I THAT A FIGHT CAN COME FROM ANY DIRECTION.
SO IF-- IF YOU DO HAVE TO FIGHT YOUR WAY OUT...
PLEASE...
...IF AT ALL POSSIBLE...
...NO KILLING.

HAAII!
PACK
THWAGK
AAII!
GGLLFFDD!
THUMP
THWACK
PACK

STARK
スターク
AGH!
OH MY GOD!
WHOAH!
ARE YOU OKAY?
LISTEN, WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
I INFILTRATED THE YOSHIDA FORTRESS. HARADA *IS* THERE.
WITH THE HAND, YES.
BUT THEY ARE AGAIN, IT SEEMS, IN A PARTNERSHIP.
THE TERRORISTS HYDRA WERE *ALSO* THERE.
MADAME HYDRA WAS THERE. IT WAS DEFINITELY HER.
MADAME HYDRA FELL OFF THE GRID TWO MONTHS AGO...
OY WITH THE MADAME HYDRA!!
I'M-I'M SORRY. CAP?
WHO *IS* THIS?
ARE YOU HURT?
I'M SORRY I FAILED YOU.
HOW DID YOU FAIL? SOUNDS LIKE YOU--

FUNK FUNK

FUNK FUNK

FUNK FUNK

FUNK FUNK

JEEZ!

I'M SORRY...

...I FAILED YOU.

TO BE CONTINUED...

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

Hey gang, sorry for the delay on the letters page. We've been telling stories that are a page longer than normal, so I've just been bumping the letters page back and back—BUT NO MORE! So, last time we talked, I asked for you to let me know if you thought NEW AVENGERS was similar to DC Comics' flagship title. Here's what you thought:

Andy,

Being a longtime fan of both Marvel and DC super-teams and having read both titles off and on, I have to say NO. The two titles are not alike in my opinion.

AVENGERS to me has always been more human. It's about human beings with great strength, great weaknesses and doing great heroics. The DC team has always seemed close to god-like though they too possess great strength, great weaknesses and do great deeds.

I haven't picked up an AVENGERS book in a while. Starting with the Dissambled storyline, I'm back collecting and reading Marvel's finest superhero team-up team.

Great Lakes Avengers Assemble!
Peter Welmerink
Rockford, Michigan

Thanks, Peter. Glad to have you back in the fold.

House of Ideas,

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I consider myself a longtime fan though I've only entered the comic books universe more or less 8 years ago. Comics and super heroes--I can say this proudly--saved my life. For this, I'll always be grateful. However, there was a period during these 8 years when it seemed to me quality was a value lost to quantity. It made me a sad panda. And now? What is happening now? THIS is the golden age: talented writers, talented pencilers, talented people who want to create good reads so much you can feel it on the paper--okay, maybe I'm a bit exaggerating here, but still… And to the point, NEW AVENGERS is a good example of this, written like a great TV show--thank you Mr. Bendis, for everything--with great characterization... it nearly makes me sad to close the book when I'm done with it.

As for the issue dealing with DC's "flagship title," I think it feels a bit close in the sense that you take characters people love and you make them interact, that's all. Plus, Superman is not Cap, Iron Man ain't Green Lantern or whoever...these are characters I love getting together. What's not to like?

DK
Paris, France.

We certainly are using some popular characters in NEW AVENGERS. No doubt about that. We've also added several not-so-popular characters. Prior to this series, few people were clamoring for a book featuring Spider-Woman, Luke Cage, or The Sentry. If they become more popular now, that's great! Speaking of Sentry, I'll discuss your letters about the Sentry arc in the next letters page.

Andy,

You asked if we think that NEW AVENGERS is just like DC's flagship title. I can see where that criticism came from, and the thought did occur to me before I read an issue of the series. But it didn't last beyond the first few pages and it's totally out the window by issue #3.

Look, I'm a lifelong JLA fan and have preferred DC to Marvel for the last 15 years or so, so believe me, if this was some JLA clone I'd make snarky remarks and leave it on the shelf. But it isn't, and it won't be.

What fans should remember is this: I think the fundamental differences between the JLA and the AVENGERS were best expressed in JLA/AVENGERS; both groups are composed of powerful heroes, but the settings, tone, and outlook of the universes have always been very different and that's where a lot of the fun and appeal lies.

It's a question of style, you know? If you were trying to do NEW AVENGERS in a DC style, it'd probably be awful. Look what happened when DC tried to do the JLA in what someone thought was a Marvel style: JLA Detroit. But this NEW AVENGERS is in the best of Marvel traditions: human interaction, proud history, back to basics: Cap asking Spider-Man, "How's that working out for you?" I mean seriously, how cool was that?

What some fans forget is that the JLA isn't composed of top-selling characters for the sake of being top-selling characters; those characters were the original JLA, and when they were reunited under Morrison's run, it was in some ways a back-to-basics approach.

In NEW AVENGERS, you have (so far as I can see) an offbeat group that reminds me (in composition) of the early days of Giffen/ DeMatties *Justice League*; a genuinely new mix of characters that haven't been put together before. I'm interested to see where this goes, and the mix itself gives you lots of interesting possibilities.

Long story short, you have a new regular reader. I refuse to knock a comic company for taking a chance, and I think you're taking a chance. Go for it.

Brian Clarke,
Richmond, BC

Thanks for the kind words. We're trying to do something new, but after over 30 years of great stories, man, it's hard to do something that hasn't been tried before. And we aren't looking to step on any great creator's toes. Thanks for your support, Brian.

Dear New Avengers,

Keep up the great storyline, great art and tell the folks who want it all wrapped up and nice and no one really ever gets hurt or killed that DC has a team book just for them--which this doesn't resemble at all, to answer your question from #3, except that they are both team books.

Steve Marusich
Beltsville, MD

What!? DC does team books? We ARE ripping them off! Somebody get me Bendis!!!

New Andy,

When JLA re-launched in the mid-90s, I knew who everybody on the team was and had since I was about four years old...except Martian Manhunter, who I learned about when I was 14 and started reading comic books. By contrast, I have no idea who Sentry is, and wouldn't know who Luke Cage was if I hadn't started reading Marvel a couple of years back.

Secondly, within the first issue of JLA, all but one member of the team had joined up, with the seventh joining in issue two. Here we are on issue five of NEW AVENGERS and members are still trickling in with some yet to appear.

Finally, JLA could fit an entire story into a single issue. NEW AVENGERS has taken five issues for the first story and it apparently ain't over yet.

I'm not trying to bash NA or anything, but, well, you did ask. It was a good issue, but, what was up with that one scene, where there are two shirtless dudes hanging out on a throne overlooking a half-dozen naked people hanging from the ceiling...? Bendis, please explain yourself.

J. C. Raphael
(via e-mail)

Thanks, J.C. You represent the minority on this one, though I suspect if a certain other book had asked this question in its letters page (if only it had one… sigh) we might have seen a different slant. As for the pacing, I hope it grows on you. We've got some shorter stories coming your way starting with this very issue! The 3-part "RONIN" story starts right here! And speaking of naked people (hey, you brought it up), issue #14 is the first issue of a 2-parter illustrated by Frank (SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL) Cho.

Dear NEW AVENGERS,

Earth's Mightiest Heroes will always be easily compared with their Distinguished Competition's flagship team. JL fans know they've seen their own drastic roster changes. An iconic group of God-like beings who congregate in their orbiting satellite is more celestial than human. Yet with a God of Thunder counted amongst their ranks, The Avengers are by all means a "World's Finest" team in their own right. Especially now, considering the star power of Spider-Man, Wolverine and even The Sentry.

However, in my humble opinion, if you were to line one team up against its counterpart you'd see more of a contrast then a parallel. If DC and Marvel heroes were drafted by the NBA, The Justice League would be the squeaky clean, smooth Los Angeles Lakers. The Avengers, a scrappier, grittier group, would probably play for the Philadelphia 76ers. And if you can't follow me, think about Allen Iverson's pins in his ankle taking it to the hole against the mammoth Shaq and tell me you don't immediately equate that with Logan on Sabertooth or Spidey tackling Firelord!

Marvel's definitive irony puts an under-doggish spin on its premiere super team. Their resident playboy philanthropist is a reformed alcoholic. Their leader is somebody your grandmother probably sang show tunes with in her high school glee club.

And you guys finally enlisted Spider-Man, much like the Dark Knight who has fit right in with a best of the best team despite his loner persona. What took so long for this to happen?

No more government funding? Stark lost his fortune? Agoraphobic flying super-human guys? Web-wedgies? This is no JLA.

Matt Swift
Pensacola,FL

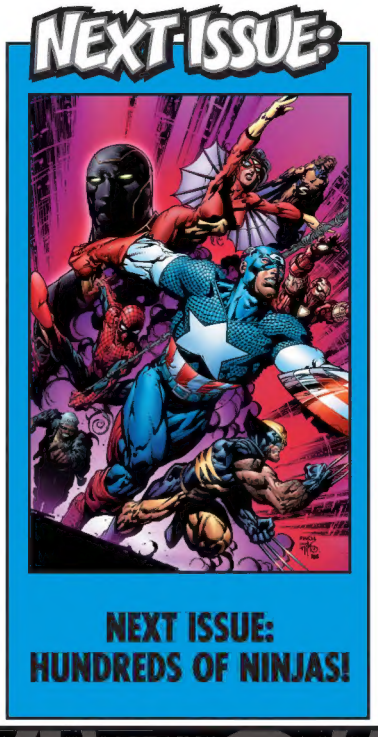
Matt, I had to print that. I have no idea what half of it means as I don't follow the NBA. College ball is the way to go. But any time someone throws Shaq and Iverson in a NEW AVENGERS letter, there's something poetic going on. Thanks.

Web-wedgies. I like that.

That's it for today. Next time we'll see what you thought of the 4-part "SENTRY" storyline and Steve McNiven's art!

Thanks for all your continued support.

-New Andy



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